

I 5. (Seven Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 43, wherein said template conveyor comprises a chain conveyor with a pair of chain wheels and having a run thereof extending along the respective die or counter-die but beyond the encumbrance thereof.

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I 6. (Seven Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 43, wherein said template conveyor extends through at least one work and/or treatment station and moves stepwise at the opening-closure rate of the dies for receiving thermoformed articles from an extraction plate associated with said extraction pick-up means, said extraction plate withdrawing one or more thermoformed articles from the female die and transferring the one or more thermoformed articles to at least one receiving conveying template of said one or more receiving conveying templates, said template conveyor conveying the thermoformed articles in sequence to said at least one work and/or treatment station along the template conveyor.

I 3 7. (Five Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said template conveyor conveys two alternate movable templates of the receiving conveying templates, so that one of said movable templates is moved laterally, in relation to the female die, at said at least one work and/or treatment station, while the other movable template is in front of it to receive a thermoformed article.

I 4 8. (Six Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said template conveyor is a chain conveyor which comprises a pair of chain wheels around which a respective chain is wound, the one or more receiving conveying templates being carried at a predetermined distance spaced from each other on said chain conveyor.

I 5 9. (Four Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said template conveyor further comprises a train of articulated bearing slides or carriages for each receiving conveying template moving through said at least one work and/or treatment station.

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10. (Five Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 43, wherein said retention means further comprises a truncated conical collar adjacent each receiving hole.

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11. (Three Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein said collar is constituted of resiliently deformable material suitable for exercising retentive pressure on the external surface of a thermoformed article.

12. (Four Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein said collar comprises a plurality of resiliently loaded ratchets, installed in said collar and movable towards its internal diameter for engaging with the external surface of a thermoformed article in said receiving hole.

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13. (Three Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein said collar comprises suction orifices which exert on a thermoformed article a suction to hold the thermoformed article in proper orientation.

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14. (Six Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein the thermoformed articles have rims and wherein at least one receiving conveying template has a peripheral recess formed on the exterior surface of the template about at least one receiving hole for engaging the rim of a thermoformed article received in the at least one receiving hole.

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15. (Six Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein the thermoformed articles have rims and wherein at least one receiving hole further comprises a two-diameter adaptor collar installable in said at least one receiving hole, said adaptor collar having an internal diameter delimited by a tapered upper section, an undercut intermediate section, and an annular shoulder downstream of the undercut section, for receiving a thermoformed article and snap-engage its rim at said undercut section.

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16. (Three Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein the thermoformed articles have rims and wherein said receiving holes have a slightly smaller internal dimension than the external dimension of the thermoformed articles adjacent their rims to be received, so that the thermoformed article is resiliently constrained and properly oriented in the respective receiving hole.

17. (Three Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, further including eccentric mechanical arrests, each of which is fitted at a respective receiving hole of a conveying template and is movable between an operating position in which it engages the rim of a flanged thermoformed article and an inoperative releasing position.

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18. (Twice Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 17, wherein said arrests are controlled by a rack operated by a motion source.

19. (Three Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, further including air jets for sinking each of the articles into the receiving holes.

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20. (Four Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, further including a cup-shaped receiving component for a thermoformed article, the cup-shaped component being disposed adjacent at least one of said receiving holes and having at least one orifice in a bottom of the cup-shaped component.

21. (Three Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 20, further comprising a push rod for expelling the thermoformed article from the cup-shaped component by acting through said at least one orifice in the bottom of the cup-shaped component.

115 23. (Five Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said retention means further comprises a push-rod which rises from a surface of each receiving conveying template.

Sub 21 43. (Three Times Amended) A thermoforming apparatus comprising:
a thermoforming machine fitted with at least one female die; and
extraction pick-up means adapted to withdraw a plurality of thermoformed articles from the female die, said extraction pick-up means including a receiving seat for each thermoformed article to be extracted,

EH wherein the thermoforming machine is fitted with at least one counter-die, the at least one female die and counter-die being reciprocally approachable and removable for the operations of closing, thermoforming and opening,

the apparatus further comprising a feeder for feeding thermoforming material between each female die and counter-die, and

at least one receiving station adapted to receive one or more thermoformed articles, wherein said receiving station comprises one or more receiving conveying templates in a template conveyor, each receiving conveying template having an exterior surface and one or more receiving holes disposed within said template and communicating with said exterior surface, each receiving hole having an annular collar to define a retention means for holding a thermoformed article disposed in the hole, said annular collar having an interior dimension being smallest in a region furthest from said exterior surface.

117 45. (Once Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said template conveyor comprises a carousel conveyor having at least three arms angularly spaced apart each supporting a respective receiving conveying template.